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ABSTRACT

This research synthesis provides an overview of the issues central to adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs since researchers and policymakers have shown interest in exploring new possibilities for the ESL component. The following topics are discussed of the Adult Education Act (AEA). The following topics are discussed in the report: (1) the demand and need for services, with special attention to who, how many, and where members of the limited-Englist-proficiency target and (ESL) participant populations are: (2) administration, funding, and staffing issues; (3) curricular and instructional practices; (4) assessment, evaluation, and accountability structures; and (5) effectiveness of adult ESL programs. The information presented in the report was collected from a variety of sources. Four major conclusions were drawn from this examination. First, ESL is different from adult basic education and adult secondary education components of the AEA, which reinforces the importance of examining ESL individually in a study such as this. Next, ESL is a concern specific to a subset of states and urban areas as the ESL population is highly concentrated in individual cities and states and demands associated with this population tend to fall on the shoulders of the areas affected. Third, diversity exists among adult ESL programs in terms of population characteristics, administration and funding, and curricular and instructional approaches. Last, while this report provides background on ESL programs and services, in many cases there is limited knowledge about program approaches and practices on which to base future policy. (JL) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literary Education)

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ADULT ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: AN OVERVIEW OF POLICIES, PARTICIPANTS AND PRACTICES

March 1995

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Multilevel Special Populations Division

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Adult English as a Second Language Programs: An Overview of Policies, Participants, and Practices

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Introduction

Federally supported adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs date back to 1964 when the Adult Basic Education Program was established as part of the Economic Opportunity Act. ESL was presented as an "option" in that piece of legislation. Since then the emphasis on adult ESL educational services in the federal legislation focussed on the educational needs of adults has increased. Figure 1 displays the history of adult literacy legislation as it pertains to ESL services.

Currently, ESL instruction is the largest and fastest growing component of the Adult Education Act (AEA), and demand continues to increase dramatically. As recently as 1981, ESL learners represented less than 20 percent of adults served by the AEA. Now, nearly one half of AEA program enrollees enter ESL instruction (Development Associates, 1994b).[1] In response, states must decide upon the optimal mix of funding and service provision to meet the changing demand.

Researchers and policy makers alike have shown interest in exploring new possibilities for the ESL component of the AEA. Several proposals have recently been advanced to improve educational services for adults with limited English proficiency (LEP).

- **Separate funding and program authority.** Some experts have recommended disentangling ESL funding and program authority from the other two components of the Basic Grants to States Program of the AEA--Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) (see Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). Separate funding, they argue, would allow more equitable distribution of federal ESL grants based on the relative number of LEP adults in each state, rather than the relative number of adults without a high school education. Separate program authority, they say, would place responsibility for developing, managing, and coordinating ESL services in distinct state and local offices, replacing neglect with accountability.

- **ESL funding earmarks within the current AEA structure.** An alternative to the complete separation of ESL from other AEA services would be to require a portion of federal AEA funds to be dedicated to ESL services. Currently, states are prohibited from spending more than 20 percent of federal AEA money on ASE, but there are no guidelines for allocating funds between ABE and ESL.

Given the increasingly strong role that ESL has played in federal adult education legislation coupled with the growing demand for ESL services, a better understanding of this component of the AEA can help to inform decisions regarding future directions for the AEA in general, and the role of ESL in particular. This research synthesis provides an overview of the issues central to adult ESL programs to help inform policy makers, particularly those currently deliberating reauthorization of the AEA. The following topics are of particular interest in the report:

- Need and demand for services, with special attention to who, how many, and where members of the LEP target and ESL participant populations are
- Administration, funding, and staffing issues
- Curricular and instructional practices
- Assessment, evaluation, and accountability structures
- Effectiveness of adult ESL programs.

FIGURE 1

ESL Components of the Adult Education Act

1964	The Adult Basic Education Program was established in Title II-B of the Economic Opportunity Act (P.L.88-452). Title II-B was permissive, offering states the option for ESL instruction to move "toward elimination of the inability of all adults to read and write English."
1966	Congress enacted the Adult Education Act (P.L.89-750), which codified Title II-13 of the 1964 statute. It also expanded the program to adults with limited English proficiency, and authorized grants for special experimental demonstration projects and for teacher training.
1972	The Adult Education Act was amended (P.L. 92-318) to authorize grants to support planning, pilot and demonstration projects providing adult education for Indians. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education issued administrative clarification to states (Program Memorandum AB73-4, September 14, 1972) on the legality and priority of ESL classes.
1974	The Adult Education Act was amended (P.L. 93-380) to require that state adult education plans include special assistance for persons of limited English-speaking ability by providing bilingual programs.
1978	Further amendments (P.L. 95-561) required that 10 percent of State grants be used for demonstration and teacher training, including "methods for educating persons of limited English-speaking ability." They also authorized a state grant program for education of Indochinese refugees.
1981	The first discretionary ESL programs were initiated to meet the language and literacy needs of a larger number of immigrants, including the Indochinese refugees and Cuban/Haitian immigrants.
1988	Congress again amended the Adult Education Act (P.L. 100-297), expanding the scope to include, among other things, an English Literacy Grants Program to support services to limited English proficient adults and their families.
1991	Congress enacted new legislation (P.L. 102-73), the National Literacy Act of 1991 (NLA). Provisions included an increase from 10 to 15 percent in the State set-aside for special demonstration and teacher training projects. The NLA's teacher training provision placed particular emphasis on the training of professional educators of adults with limited English proficiency.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. *Teaching Adults with Limited English Skills: Progress and Challenges*, 1991.

The information presented in this report was collected from a variety of sources. We relied on several recent large-scale comprehensive studies of adult education, as well as numerous other sources in the literature. In addition, we talked with selected experts in the field.

Four major conclusions follow from our examination:

- ESL is different from the ABE and ASE components of AEA in many ways, including the central goals, target and participation population characteristics, curricular and instructional approaches, and outcomes. This finding reinforces the importance of examining ESL individually in a study such as this.

- ESL is, to a large extent, a concern specific to a subset of states and urban areas. The ESL population is highly concentrated in individual states and cities throughout the country and the demands associated with this population tend to fall on the shoulders of the states and cities affected.

- Diversity exists among adult ESL programs in terms of population characteristics, administration and funding, and curricular and instructional approaches.

- While this report provides background on ESL programs and services, in many cases there is limited knowledge about program approaches and practices on which to base future policy.

Need and Demand for Adult ESL Services

In this section, we present evidence that suggests there is both a significant need and demand for adult ESL services, and these are especially important to address in the particular geographical areas throughout the nation where the target population is most concentrated.

This section is divided into two subsections. First, the need for adult ESL services is assessed in terms of the number of individuals who could potentially benefit from ESL educational programs-- the LEP target population. Relevant questions include: Who are members of the LEP target population? What is their current status and distribution in the U.S.? What are the future projections for this population? In the second subsection, demand for adult ESL services is addressed in terms of the number of individuals who are enrolled in ESL programs--the ESL participant population. Note that this definition of demand is complicated by issues of supply. While figures representing enrollment are intended to reflect the magnitude of the demand, they may also be capturing the supply of services. To the degree that access to programs is insufficient, our conception of demand is limited by supply.

Issues of Need: The LEP Target Population

Definition of the Adult LEP Target Population

Federal legislation provides only a functional definition of the target population--those individuals who are limited in English proficiency (LEP) and therefore have the potential to benefit from instruction in English language and literacy. There are at least two ways to identify members of this population. The first is through a functional survey such as the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). However, many of the individuals who suffer from LEP in the U.S. were unable to complete the NALS assessments and are not included in its results. In addition, the NALS assessment is a literacy test which does not differentiate between those with poor English skills and those with poor literacy skills. Moreover, the NALS cannot be used to identify state-level estimates except in those states that chose to participate in the NALS assessments.

An alternative is to identify this population by establishing several broad criteria that typically describe LEP adults. We can begin with the conventional definition of the AEA target population, which includes those individuals at least 16 years old who have not attained a high school diploma or its equivalent and are not currently enrolled in school. A subset of this target population speak English as a second language (ESL) and are consequently members of the LEP target population. In addition, the AEA target population includes adults with high school degrees if they have functional deficits that put them below the standards expected of high school graduates. Limited English proficiency is one such deficit which qualifies adults for AEA services in general, and ESL services in particular.[2]

Characteristics of the Adult LEP Target Population

There are a number of characteristics common among members of the LEP target population. First, there is a strong relationship between immigrant status and limited English proficiency. About two thirds of all recent immigrants (three years or less) are LEP, and about 76 percent of the 12 to 14 million LEP adults living in the U.S. are immigrants (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).

In addition, there is evidence that this population suffers from disproportionately lower wages, fewer educational opportunities, and more restricted ability to participate in American society. Each of these factors, along with supporting evidence provided in a report conducted by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, is described below (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).[3]

Income and employment. Authors of the Southport study assert that, on average, the majority of LEP adults have significantly lower incomes than other Americans. Figure 2 illustrates the 1990 income ranges for LEP persons age 18 and older who were employed.

- Based on an analysis of the November 1989 Current Population Survey, limited English proficiency is associated with the relatively low incomes of immigrants (Meisenheimer, 1992).

- Immigrants tend to have limited employment opportunities in the U.S. The jobs available are generally those in the secondary labor market (e.g., positions as housekeepers, janitors, gardeners, farm laborers, and unskilled workers) which tend to be associated with low wages, few benefits, and little security.

Educational opportunities. Entry requirements for academic and vocational study at almost all postsecondary institutions include a level of English proficiency which generally exceeds that of LEP adults.[4]

Ability to participate in American society. Authors of the Southport study report that LEP adults tend to suffer from limited access to public services, the inability to fill out forms for employment or government purposes, a lack of knowledge about public affairs, and barriers to becoming active members of their neighborhoods and communities.

These circumstances affect both the individuals who have limited skills in English as well as the communities in which they live. Consequently, at both the individual and the societal level the literacy needs of the LEP target population constitute a significant problem for which effective adult ESL programs may provide some assistance.

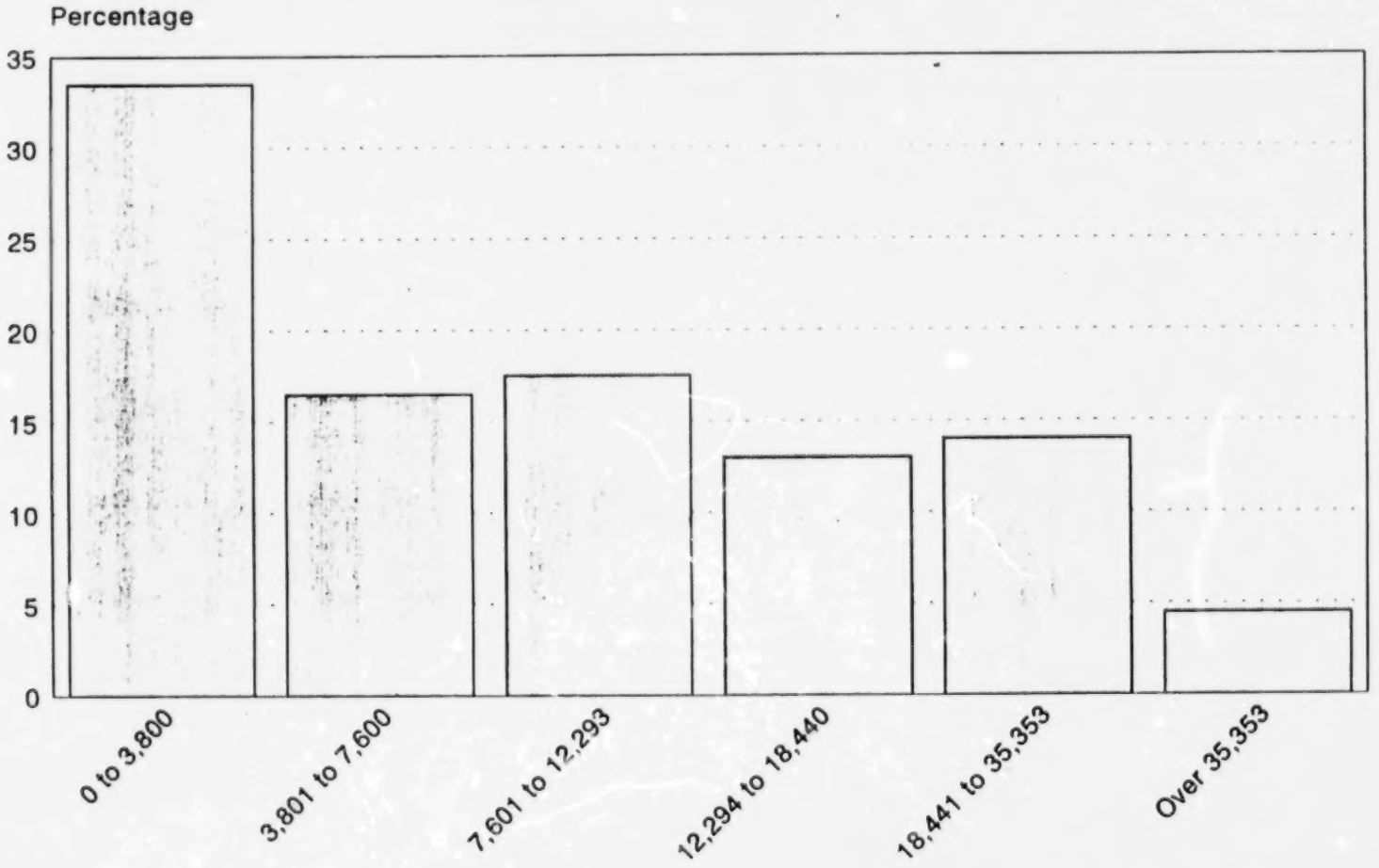
Current Status and Distribution of the Adult LEP Target Population

The social and economic disadvantages that tend to be associated with limited English proficiency indicate a need to provide educational services to the adult LEP target population. Yet, what is the magnitude of the need? How many individuals comprise the adult LEP target population? Where are they most concentrated? How might their numbers change in the future?

Estimates of the LEP target population. The adult LEP target population includes those adults who are either (1) members of the adult AEA target population and speak Enlgish as a second language, or (2) LEP with a high school diploma or its equivalent. Drawing on data from the 1990 census, Thorne and Fleenor (1993) estimate that the adult education target population totals roughly 44.1 million, nearly 27 percent of the entire adult population of the United States. This includes individuals who are at least 15 years old, who have not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent, and who are not currently enrolled in school. Of this 44 million, 10.2 million (23 percent) speak English as a second language. There are an additional 2.1 million adults who do possess a high school diploma but who are limited English proficient (LEP). Adding these figures, the LEP target population totals over 12 million individuals, and makes up about 7.5 percent of the total U.S. adult population (Thorne and Fleenor, 1993).

FIGURE 2

Income Levels of Limited English Proficient Adults



SOURCE: Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993

Distribution of the target population. The LEP target population is highly concentrated in particular regions, states, and cities throughout the nation, making the percentage of this population disproportionately high in these demographic areas. Table 1 shows the regional distribution of the target population of the three AEA instructional components. In contrast to ABE and ASE, the majority of the LEP target population lives in the Western region of the U.S. Further, relatively few LEP target population members live in the North Central region of the country.

Table 2 presents the distribution of the LEP target population across the 50 states in 1990. The final two columns of the table provide data on the LEP target population--adults in the AEA target population with ESL in addition to LEP adults who have a high school diploma or its equivalent. States are ordered by the size of their LEP target populations.

- Absolute numbers of adults in the LEP target population suggest that the need for ESL services is greatest in California followed in decreasing order by Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey. Fully 29 percent of the LEP target population in 1990 resided in California. In fact, 73 percent of all LEP adults lived in six states: California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of the adult LEP target population among the states.

- If need is defined as concentration (that is, a high percentage of the adult population falling within the LEP target population), then the need for ESL services is greatest in New Mexico where 20 percent of the state adult population fall in the LEP target group. New Mexico is followed closely by California, Texas, Hawaii, New York, and Arizona. As shown in Table 2, between 12 and 20 percent of the 1990 adult populations in these states were in the LEP target group.

- With these states, particular localities (usually urban) are affected by a high concentration of LEP adults. Figure 4 illustrates the concentration of the adult LEP target populations within selected cities in 1990. In each of the three largest cities in the U.S. -- New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago -- 20 percent or more of the adult population qualified as potentially needing ESL services. In Miami, the figure exceeds 50 percent.

Future Projections for the Adult LEP Target Population: Immigration Trends

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that by the year 2000, 17.4 million LEP adults will be living in the United States (United States Department of Education, 1991; Office of Technology Assessment, 1993). The corresponding figure for 1990 is 12 million (Thorne and Fleenor, 1993). The driving force behind the steady growth of the adult LEP target population is immigration of LEP adults to the United States.

- The Development Associates (1994b) study estimates that immigration to the U.S. adds 643 thousand adults to the adult LEP target population annually (i.e., the number of immigrants the U.S. from non-English speaking countries).

- Southport's estimate, based on current immigration rates and the finding that 67 percent of adults recently arriving to the U.S. are LEP, concludes that immigration adds just over 600 thousand adults to the LEP target population each year.

Growth of immigration to the U.S. Since the passage of the Adult Education Act in 1966, immigration to the United States has grown at a steady pace, increasing from 323 thousand

TABLE 1

Estimates of ESL, ABE, and ASE Target Populations By Region

	ESL		ABE		ASE	
Region	Target Population	Percentage of Target Population	Target Population	Percentage of Target Population	Target Population	Percentage of Target Population
Northeast	3,148,000	25.5	1,911,000	16.6	4,304,000	19.3
North Central	1,392,000	11.3	2,884,000	25.0	5,515,000	24.7
South	3,216,000	26.1	5,619,000	48.7	9,145,000	40.9
West	4,567,000	37.1	1,132,000	9.8	3,377,000	15.1
Total	**12,323,000**	**100.0**	**11,546,000**	**100.0**	**22,341,000**	**100.0**

SOURCE: Development Associates, October 1994

NOTES: Based on midline estimate of 2.9 million AEA enrollees in a 12 month period

TABLE 2

ADULT POPULATION, ADULT EDUCATION TARGET POPULATION WITH ESL, AND LEP ADULTS WITH DIPLOMA BY STATE

	Adult Population	Adult Ed Target with ESL		LEP Adults with Diploma		Adult Ed Targ Plus LEP wit
STATE	Number	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
California	18,986,584	2,981,372	15.7	562,447	3.0	3,543,819
Texas	10,723,096	1,449,288	13.5	203,647	1.9	1,652,935
New York	12,061,310	1,251,722	10.4	329,536	2.7	1,581,258
Florida	9,134,298	650,843	7.1	174,885	1.9	825,728
Illinois	7,524,411	471,405	6.3	110,187	1.5	581,592
New Jersey	5,318,202	422,131	7.9	121,200	2.3	543,331
Massachusetts	4,089,625	284,157	6.9	60,818	1.5	344,975
Pennsylvania	8,209,165	274,766	3.3	52,413	0.6	327,179
Arizona	2,358,571	241,907	10.3	35,302	1.5	277,209
Michigan	5,997,507	161,970	2.7	31,577	0.5	193,547
Connecticut	2,260,007	152,185	6.7	35,379	1.6	187,564
New Mexico	936,120	161,949	17.3	24,888	2.7	186,837
Ohio	7,202,280	148,660	2.1	32,226	0.4	180,886
Louisiana	2,670,561	154,680	5.8	23,472	0.9	178,152
Washington	3,214,797	99,369	3.1	25,563	0.8	124,932
Colorado	2,131,959	100,800	4.7	17,589	0.8	118,389
Hawaii	735,869	78,489	10.7	27,134	3.7	105,623
Virginia	4,193,529	72,654	1.7	30,924	0.7	103,578
Maryland	3,216,678	69,637	2.2	26,889	0.8	96,526
Wisconsin	3,208,994	79,632	2.5	13,336	0.4	92,968
Rhode Island	678,423	68,414	10.1	11,120	1.6	79,534
Indiana	3,673,627	64,397	1.8	13,493	0.4	77,890
Georgia	4,307,934	56,295	1.3	19,336	0.4	75,631
Minnesota	2,839,222	60,646	2.1	12,517	0.4	73,163
Oregon	1,895,093	48,602	2.6	11,013	0.6	59,615
Nevada	819,093	46,719	5.7	10,254	1.3	56,973
North Carolina	4,510,743	39,894	0.9	14,319	0.3	54,213
Missouri	3,425,987	38,968	1.1	10,996	0.3	49,964
Oklahoma	2,057,959	39,509	1.9	8,874	0.4	48,383
Maine	834,028	36,334	4.4	6,768	0.8	43,102
Kansas	1,605,635	34,609	2.2	7,192	0.4	41,801
New Hampshire	740,812	26,642	3.6	5,465	0.7	32,107
Utah	931,360	24,884	2.7	6,739	0.7	31,623
Iowa	1,829,936	26,295	1.4	5,253	0.3	31,548
Tennessee	3,336,249	20,886	0.6	7,857	0.2	28,743
South Carolina	2,311,227	19,800	0.9	6,552	0.3	26,352
North Dakota	407,280	23,410	5.7	2,240	0.5	25,650
Nebraska	1,017,615	20,695	2.0	3,997	0.4	24,692
Alabama	2,680,255	18,597	0.7	5,836	0.2	24,433
Kentucky	2,482,671	16,456	0.7	5,062	0.2	21,518
District of Columbia	422,854	16,848	4.0	4,135	1.0	20,983
Idaho	616,156	18,612	3.0	2,352	0.4	20,964
Alaska	337,214	15,395	4.6	4,440	1.3	19,835
Arkansas	1,584,281	14,973	0.9	3,751	0.2	18,724
South Dakota	447,917	14,799	3.8	1,533	0.3	18,332
Mississippi	1,635,945	13,224	0.8	3,879	0.2	17,103
Delaware	444,801	10,186	2.3	2,180	0.5	12,366
Montana	515,417	10,55[illegible]	2.0	1,736	0.3	12,291
West Virginia	1,231,942	8,747	0.7	2,286	0.2	11,033
Vermont	370,603	7,256	2.0	1,618	0.4	8,874
Wyoming	279,667	7,116	2.5	1,251	0.4	8,367
Total	164,445,509	10,179,379	6.2	2,143,[illegible]	1.3	12,322,835

SOURCE: 1990 Census Data

FIGURE 3

Distribution of the Limited English Proficient Target Population Among States

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

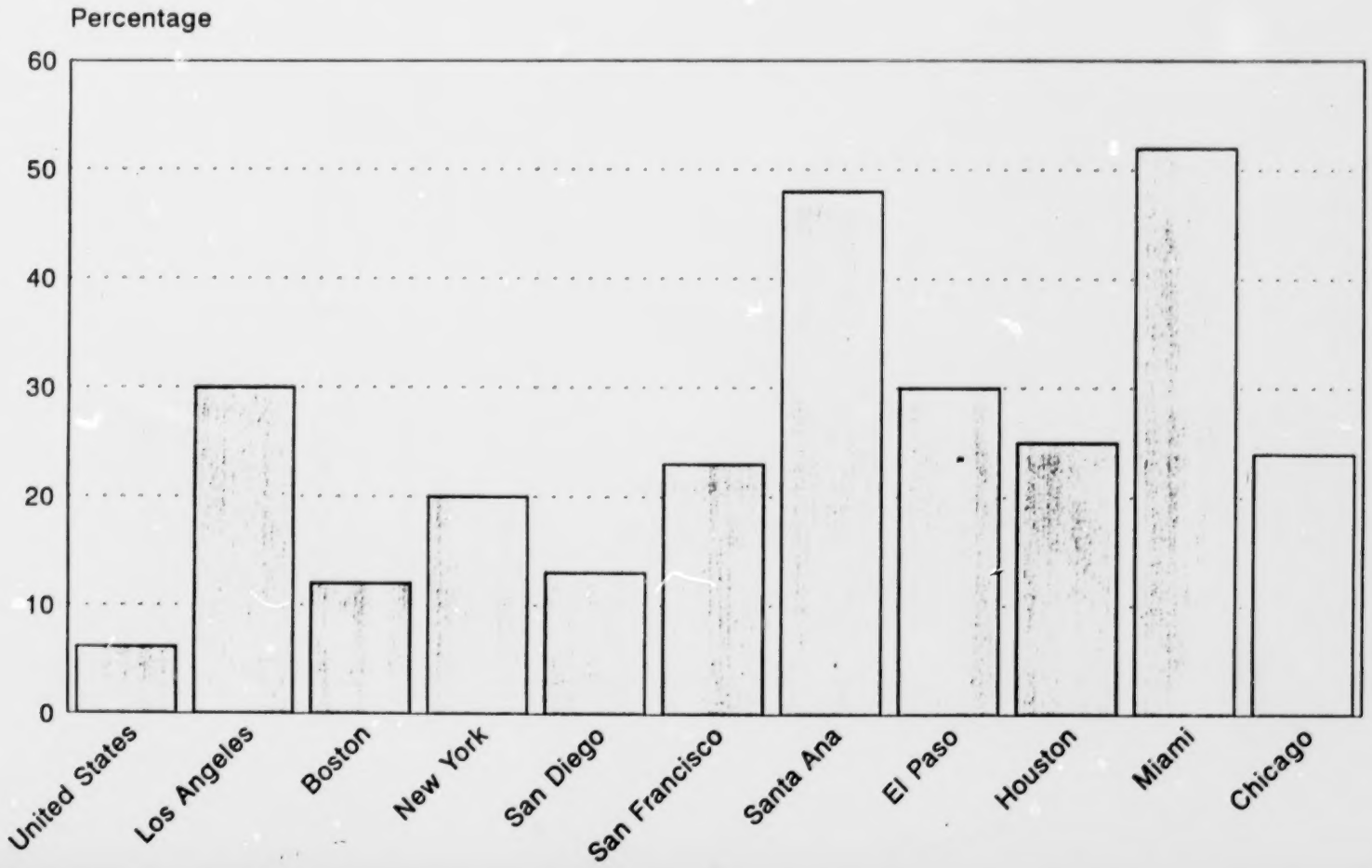
Number of adults in the state who are members of the LEP target Population

Over 2,000,000 | 1,000,000 - 1,999,999 | 500,000 - 999,999

100,000 - 499,999 | 50,000 - 999,999 | 0 - 49,999

FIGURE 4

Percent of Adult Population in LEP Target Popuiation -- Selected Cities and Total



immigrants per year in 1966 to nearly 900 thousand in 1994. Between 1989 and 1991, however, immigration jumped dramatically to an annual average of nearly 1.5 million over the three year period. This was caused, in part, by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which facilitated a large cohort of illegal resident aliens first to become temporary, then permanent U.S. residents.

Common places of origin and residence of immigrants. Generally, more immigrants arrive each year from Mexico than from any other single country. Mexicans have constituted roughly 10 percent of non-IRCA immigrants over the past decade, and represented between 70 and 80 percent of IRCA legalized immigrants (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1994).

- In 1990, 44 percent of the 1.5 million immigrants and 62 percent of the 679 thousand Mexican immigrants intended to reside in California. The Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area alone was the intended residence of 24 percent of all immigrants and 34 percent of Mexican immigrants.[5]

- Other leading states of intended residence for immigrants include, in decreasing order: New York, Texas, Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Arizona, and Virginia (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1992).

Demand for Services: The ESL Participant Population

The previous section describes the number and distribution of adults who are potentially in need of ESL educational services in order to more meaningfully and productively participate in American economic, educational, political, and social institutions. However, it does not necessarily follow that all of these individuals are actively seeking out or participating in ESL programs. Consequently, it is important to consider issues of demand for adult ESL services.

There is evidence that LEP adults want to learn English and are eager to attend educational programs for that purpose (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). In this way, they differ from members of the ABE and ASE target populations. Most of the adults targeted by ABE and ASE programs for some reason or another have had a negative experience in the American educational system. In many cases the reasons that they abandoned education in the first place play a continued role in their regard for education, creating a barrier which has proven difficult for adult ABE and ASE education programs to permeate. Conversely, these sorts of institutional barriers are less common among adult members of the LEP target population. The vast majority of this population are immigrants whose previous educational experiences, to the degree that they exist, have occurred in other countries. These individuals tend to view education in America as a valuable service that has great potential to liberate them from the limitations they face in employment, income, education, and civic participation.[6]

Estimates of the ESL participant population

The actual number of participants in adult education has been subject to some debate as a result of participation levels reported by providers to the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) not aligning with those derived from the recent Development Associates study.

- Based on data from actual enrollees in a representative sample of adult education providers, the Development Associates authors (1994b) estimate that 2.6 to 3.2 million persons were

served between April 1991 and 1992.[7] Of this group, 46 percent (1.2 to 1.5 million persons) were ESL enrollees.

- State performance reports for 1993 submitted to OVAE show 3.9 million participants enrolle in federal adult education programs over the course of the year, with 40 percent (1.6 million persons) enrolled in ESL.

Differences between these estimates underscore the difficulties that exist in collecting and maintainin accurate data on participants.[8]

The demand for ESL services is high relative to that for the other AEA components. Development Associates researchers report that while the ASE target population is almost twice the size of the LE target group, ESL accounts for 51 percent of the clients receiving services, and 76 percent of the hours of instruction received (Development Associates, 1994b). Consequently, while the need for ABE/ASE may exceed that for adult ESL, the demand is clearly greater for ESL, and trends suggest that this growing demand will continue in the years ahead.

Estimates of excess demand for ESL programs. Although estimating additional demand for services is a complex question, there is some research to support numerous anecdotal reports that adults are turned away from adult education programs or placed on waiting lists. Programs in urban areas with large ESL populations seem to be those most affected by excess demand for services, but is difficult to find hard evidence to support this observation (Moore & Stavrianos, 1994).

Data on program waiting lists constitute one indicator of excess demand. It should be noted, however, that there are problems associated with relying solely on information from waiting lists to measure excess demand. For instance, some programs do not use waiting lists and others simply do not maintain waiting list data or retain waiting lists for a short time. These circumstances may resul in an under-estimation of the excess demand for programs. While these limitations should be noted, information on waiting lists is currently the best data we have to inform estimates of excess demand. The Development Associates study indicates that:

- In mid-October (the peak enrollment period for adult education programs), 25 percent of programs surveyed in 1990 reported having waiting lists. In June of 1990, only 16 percent reported these waiting lists (Development Associates, 1994a).

- ESL programs reported having 41 thousand individuals on waiting lists, 8 percent of the population served. ABE and ASE program waiting lists combined totalled 23 thousand adults, or 2 percent of the population served (Development Associates, 1994b).

- About 59 percent of all programs reported that they could have served additional clients "ha they shown up at the right time." Most of these programs reported that they could serve fewer additional ESL clients than ABE or ASE clients (Development Associates, 1994b).

Is the need for adult ESL education being met? Because of the lack of reliable data on excess demand, it is not clear whether demand or supply is the limiting factor in ESL enrollment, and henc it is impossible to state conclusively whether or not the need among adults seeking ESL instruction i being met or how much more demand exists. Certainly, less precise sources of information suggest much more need exists. Nationally, more than 44 percent of AEA providers offer ESL programs, serving 9 percent of the LEP target population in 1989-90. Table 3 reveals differences in the degre to which individual states serve the resident target population. It appears that California is having th

TABLE 3

ADULT POPULATION, TARGET MEMBERS WITH ESL, LEP ADULTS WITH DIPLOMA, AND ESL ENROLLMENT BY STATE

	Adult Ed Target with ESL Plus LEP with Diploma	1989 ESL Enrollment in AEA Programs	
STATE	Number	Number	Percentage of ESL Target *
California	3,543,819	586,722	16.6
Texas	1,652,935	88,161	5.3
New York	1,581,258	55,916	3.5
Florida	825,728	107,289	13.0
Illinois	581,592	37,480	6.4
New Jersey	543,331	24,063	4.4
Massachusetts	344,975	15,369	4.5
Pennsylvania	327,179	9,196	2.8
Arizona	277,209	17,456	6.3
Michigan	193,547	6,206	3.2
Connecticut	187,564	15,260	8.1
New Mexico	186,837	11,017	5.9
Ohio	180,886	3,559	2.0
Louisiana	178,152	1,271	0.7
Washington	124,932	6,599	5.3
Colorado	118,389	4,334	3.7
Hawaii	105,623	13,891	13.2
Virginia	103,578	11,179	10.8
Maryland	96,526	18,293	19.0
Wisconsin	92,968	3,984	4.3
Rhode Island	79,534	2,028	2.5
Indiana	77,890	3,288	4.2
Georgia	75,631	4,157	5.5
Minnesota	73,163	8,738	11.9
Oregon	59,615	14,099	23.7
Nevada	56,973	1,621	2.8
North Carolina	54,213	1,000	1.8
Missouri	49,964	3,505	7.0
Oklahoma	48,383	3,196	6.6
Maine	43,102	632	1.5
Kansas	41,801	1,321	3.2
New Hampshire	32,107	1,071	3.3
Utah	31,623	2,002	6.3
Iowa	31,548	3,203	10.2
Tennessee	28,743	2,500	8.7
South Carolina	26,352	1,564	5.9
North Dakota	25,650	323	1.3
Nebraska	24,692	1,463	5.9
Alabama	24,433	1,906	7.8
Kentucky	21,518	410	1.9
District of Columbia	20,983	5,129	24.4
Idaho	20,964	2,564	12.2
Alaska	19,835	1,234	6.2
Arkansas	18,724	835	4.5
South Dakota	18,332	402	2.2
Mississippi	17,103	812	4.7
Delaware	12,366	619	5.0
Montana	12,291	227	1.8
West Virginia	11,033	907	8.2
Vermont	8,874	255	2.9
Wyoming	8,367	464	5.5
Total	**12,322,835**	**1,108,720**	**9.0**

SOURCE: 1990 Census Data and U.S. Department of Education, OVAE/DAEL, 1991

* Adult Ed target with ESL plus LEP with diploma

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greatest success, reaching almost 17 percent of the state's large LEP target population compared to a national average of 9 percent. In 1993, California alone accounted for over 60 percent of ESL enrollees nationwide (ED/OVAE/DAEL, 1994). On the other hand, three of the five states with the highest number of LEP adults serve less than 7 percent of the resident LEP target population. No data are available to explain the variation among states in the percent of the LEP population who enroll in adult ESL programs. Nonetheless, it is clear from Table 3 that some states are more successful than others at serving members of the LEP target population. Further, the degree to which this is the case does not appear to depend on the size of the LEP target population in the state (by which the states are ordered in Table 3).

Trends in the Demand for Services

Figure 5 shows graphically the expansion of the ESL component of the AEA. Since 1980, the number of ESL enrollees has increased nearly four fold, from 400 thousand in 1980 to just under 1.6 million in 1993. ESL has also increased in importance within the context of the AEA. In 1980 ESL accounted for only 19 percent of AEA enrollees, by 1992 that figure had increased to 31 percent, and in 1993 over 40 percent of AEA enrollees were in ESL instruction.

Characteristics of the Participant Population

Adults who participate in ESL programs vary considerably along a number of dimensions that can make the task of educating this population in English literacy a complex and difficult one. For instance, policy makers addressing the educational needs of adult ESL students must attend to the diversity that exists among the native cultures of this population. In this section, we describe the participant population along a number of dimensions. In addition, we explore the degree to which differences exist between individuals in the target population and those actually being served in the programs. We draw our findings from several recent reports that profile the demographic and educational characteristics of the adult target and participant populations.[9]

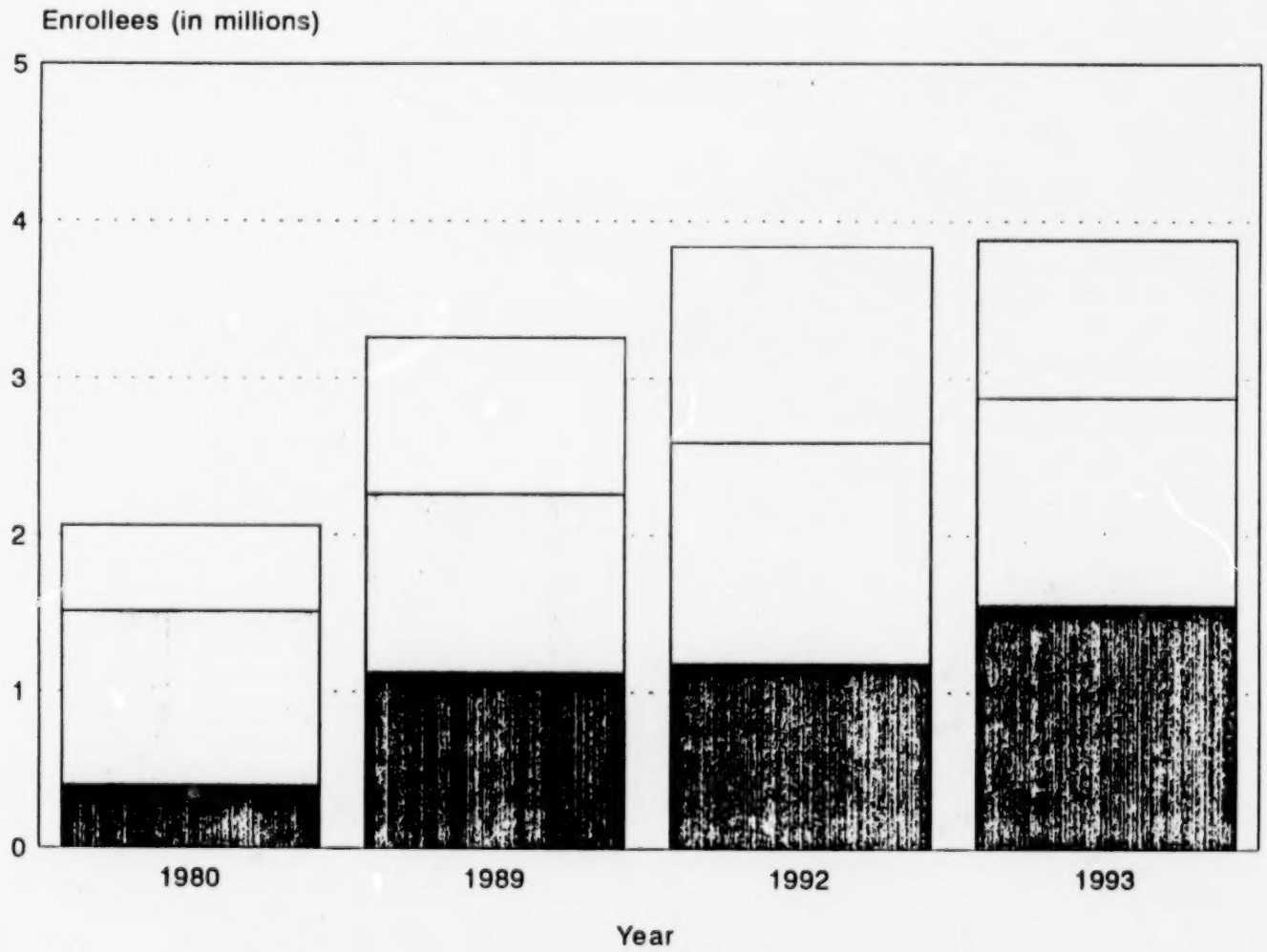
Immigrant status/ethnicity. The vast majority of adult ESL participants are immigrants. In fact, 98 percent of new ESL clients between April 1991 and April 1992 were foreign born (Development Associates, 1994b). The Hispanic culture is dominant in this regard, representing 69 percent of the adult ESL participant population who are immigrants (Development Associates, 1993). In addition, 19 percent of the adult ESL participants who are immigrants are from Asian or Pacific Island countries (Development Associates, 1993). Most of these people are in the U.S. legally and most want to improve their English literacy skills (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).

Language. About 95 percent of new adult ESL participants are from homes where a language other than English is spoken (Development Associates, 1993). Spanish is the language spoken in 72 percent of these homes (Development Associates, 1994b). Families in 19 percent of these non-English speaking homes speak an Asian language (Development Associates, 1993). The remaining 4 percent of new participants speak another non-English language at home.

Personal characteristics: Age, gender, and marital status. The population of new participants is split by gender, with 54 percent of the respondents indicating that they are female (Development Associates, 1993). Sixty-one percent of the new participants are under the age of 31 and 22 percent are between the ages of 16 and 21 (Development Associates, 1994b). About 20 percent of ESL clients are married and another 30 percent have been married at some point. The majority of ESL participants (62 percent) have no children under the age of six (Development Associates, 1993).

FIGURE 5

Adult Education Enrollees by Component Program -- Selected Years



SOURCE: OVAE / DAEL

Literacy and educational attainment. The level of previous education that adult ESL participants bring with them to the program varies widely. As many as 66 percent of the new participants in the Development Associates study (1994b) report that they are able to read "very well" in their native language. Half of the new adult ESL participants have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, and many have completed some postsecondary education (Development Associates, 1993). There is research suggesting that those who have been exposed to reading and writing in another language are more likely to succeed in English literacy than are those who are experiencing these activities for the first time (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).

In addition, the variation in cultural approaches to literacy must be recognized by ESL providers. Authors of an Aguirre International study describe that among the participant population, literate or not, "there are students whose language is based on a non-alphabetic system, such as the Chinese, or a non-Roman alphabet such as the Khmer. Among the non-literate, the Hmong, who come from a culture with a recently-developed literacy tradition, present a special challenge, since they may have difficulty with the concept of print" (Guth and Wrigley, 1992b, p.1).

Ability to speak English. Eighty-seven percent of the new adult ESL participants in the Development Associates study (1994b) rate their abilities and skills in the English language as "none" or "not well."

Employment status. The Development Associates Study (1994b) reports that about 36 percent of adult of ESL participants were employed at the time of enrollment. This number does not capture the work experience of recent immigrants who may have held jobs in their native countries. In fact, within the ESL participant population is a cohort of relatively well-educated professionals who do not speak English because of their immigrant status (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).

Income. Eleven percent of the new ESL participants surveyed by Development Associates (1994b) had received public assistance in the year prior to enrollment. Although adults with limited English proficiency generally earn lower wages than other Americans (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993), there is little data available to demonstrate how the actual ESL participant population is distributed according to income. We can only assume that wages are relatively low based on two sources of information: (1) the relatively low income of the target LEP population; and (2) the commonly expressed goal among ESL participants to increase their income levels (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen 1993).

Place of residence. The majority of adults (85 percent) who participate in ESL programs live in major metropolitan areas, and 72 percent of ESL clients live in the Western region of the U.S. (Development Associates, 1994b). Table 4 shows the distribution of ESL, ABE, and ASE participant populations across regions of the U.S.

Motivations and goals. Given the considerable variation in the characteristics of adult ESL participants, it is not surprising to find a similar degree of diversity in their motivations for participating. Authors of the Southport study cite three reasons that ESL participants commonly give for participating in ESL programs:

- higher earnings
- better educational opportunities
- improved ability to participate in American society.

TABLE 4

Estimates of ESL, ABE, and ASE Enrollment Populations By Region

Region	ESL		ABE		ASE	
	Enrollment Population	Percentage of Enrollment Population	Enrollment Population	Percentage of Enrollment Population	Enrollment Population	Percentage of Enrollment Population
Northeast	76,109	5.8	110,993	15.9	130,020	14.8
North Central	115,029	8.8	202,670	29.1	230,058	26.3
South	172,976	13.2	337,303	48.4	354,600	40.5
West	945,601	72.2	46,127	6.6	161,444	18.4
Total	**1,309,714**	**100.0**	**697,092**	**100.0**	**876,122**	**100.0**

SOURCE: Development Associates, October 1994

NOTES: Based on midline estimate of 2.9 million AEA enrollees in a 12 month period

The Southport study also reports seven motivational characteristics that tend to guide program services. These are based on a variety of research activities conducted by Southport researchers. However, exact sources and empirical evidence were not reported. Further, the authors provide no information on the relative frequencies of the various sources of motivation. Below we describe the motivations. In a later section, we explain how these motivations translate into different curricular and instructional approaches to adult ESL education.

- **Survival, lifestyle, or entry-level ESL.** Some participants are involved in ESL instruction acquire the fundamental communication skills necessary to function in American society. These include the ability to read and write basic words (including one's own signature), to interpret basic signs and symbols, and to communicate needs in the English language.

- **English acquisition as a goal in its own right.** The Southport researchers found that one c the most common initial responses to inquiries about motives for participation in adult ESL instruction was to learn English for the sake of learning the language. Some participants we on to describe more specific reasons for enrolling, but learning English is reported by Southport as a goal in its own right.

- **ESL for academic study.** In order to benefit from educational programs in the U.S., adult must have some reasonable level of proficiency in the English language. As a result, some LEP adults participate in adult ESL programs to acquire the skills necessary to enroll in and benefit from the various modes of postsecondary study including community colleges, vocational education programs, and universities. Further, some individuals come to the U.S for the explicit purpose of attending postsecondary educational institutions, but lack the English skills to enroll immediately. ESL is a prerequisite for this educational advancement

- **ESL for employment: pre-employment training.** Lack of skills in English can be a barr to employment opportunities in the U.S. LEP adults are often limited to occupations with l wages and few opportunities for advancement. Others are unable to find work at all. Consequently, some LEP adults enroll in ESL prior to employment to develop their English language and literacy skills.

- **ESL for employment: workplace training.** In addition to pre-employment ESL program some employers hire LEP adults and offer ESL educational services in the workplace. The programs are most common in demographic areas where there is a high concentration of ES adults. For employers who are concerned about the basic skills of their workers, LEP is a relatively easy problem to identify. Advancements and promotions are often contingent up success in these programs.

- **ESL for citizenship.** Some members of the adult ESL participant population are motivated by the desire to learn their rights and responsibilities, to keep up on public affairs, and to participate in their communities. In addition, evidence of English language and literacy ski is a requirement for American citizenship, which is a goal of many immigrants in the U.S.

- **ESL in family literacy.** Given the importance of the literacy level of parents in boosting t of their children, some LEP adults, women in particular, are motivated by family literacy issues to enroll and participate in adult ESL education programs.

Summary. This profile of the adult ESL participant population can be used to draw several interesting conclusions. First, while the ABE and ASE participant populations are quite similar, th

adult ESL participant population is distinct along numerous dimensions. Table 5 presents the population attributes which are available for comparison in the 1993 and 1994 Development Associates reports. The 1993 study combined ABE and ASE attributes. In general, ESL participants are more likely than their ABE and ASE counterparts to be foreign born, to have a high school degree or its equivalent, to be literate (generally in a language other than English), and to live in a major metropolitan area in the Western region of the U.S. They are less likely to receive public assistance at the time of enrollment (Development Associates, 1993, 1994b).

The participant profile also provides evidence that the ESL participant population somewhat matches the LEP target population, although not enough target population characteristics were available to allow a full comparison in this paper. Like the LEP target population, adults participating in ESL programs tend to be Hispanic-speaking immigrants who live in large cities in the Western region of the U.S. Nevertheless, a larger proportion of the ESL participant population has completed the equivalent of secondary school than has the LEP target population (50 percent compared to 17 percent).

Finally, the data presented here reveal a considerable degree of diversity among members of the adult ESL participant population. In some cases this diversity is apparent--variation exists in the gender, educational attainment, and employment status of adult ESL participants. However, in other cases where the population appears to be relatively homogeneous, diversity may be hidden in the aggregate descriptions of the population. For instance, the vast majority of the population are immigrants, but they are from different nations and cultures. It is also important to recognize the diversity that often exists within what seem to be unified cultures (e.g., within what some may think is a unified "Hispanic culture," there are many subcultures). In addition, diversity exists in the education of both literate and non-literate subsets of the population. The most accurate conclusion to draw here may be that while members of the adult ESL population share many characteristics and challenges (e.g., they all have literacy deficiencies in the English language), the nature and degree of these challenges vary widely among participants.

Some research suggests that the composite profiles of the participant population have a bimodal distribution. At one end, there is a cluster of well-educated professionals from a variety of cultures who are literate in their native languages. They lack English language skills and are enrolled in ESL classes to resume their professional lives in America. At the other end, there is a cluster of poorly-educated individuals who have low literacy skills, if any, in their native cultures. These people are generally Hispanic and are living in the Western region of the U.S. They seek English language and literacy skills for a variety of reasons including better jobs, higher incomes, and family literacy.

This high degree of diversity highlights the importance of intake assessment, which is the first step in many adult ESL programs. When individuals enter the program, they generally take a placement test. This assessment process can be extended to identify the different needs and goals that different sectors of the adult ESL participant population bring with them to the programs. The diversity that exists among the participants is a major challenge to programs, and, in many adult educators' minds, has implications for the curricular and instructional approaches used.

TABLE 5

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF CLIENTS WHO ENROLLED IN FEDERAL ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS BETWEEN APRIL 1991 AND APRIL 1992

Characteristics	New ESL Clients	New ABE Clients	New ASE Clients	New ABE and ASE Clients
Foreign born:	98%			9%
Gender[a]:				
Female	54%			61%
Male	46%			39%
Age:				
16 to 21 years	22%	28%	44%	
22 to 30 years	39%	30%	27%	
31 years or older	39%	42%	29%	
Have a high shcool diploma or GED:	50%	22%	13%	
Employment Status at time of Enrollment:				
Employed	48%	41%	42%	
Unemployed or not in labor force	52%	59%	58%	
Receipt of Public Assistance[a,b]	11%	23%	22%	
Live in a major metropolitan area	85%	43%	33%	
Enrollment by Region of Country [c]				
Northeast	6%	15%	15%	
North Central	9%	29%	27%	
South	13%	49%	41%	
West	71%	7%	18%	

SOURCE: Development Associates, December 1994, *Fourth Report DRAFT.*

[a] Data from Development Associates, September 1993, *Second Interim DRAFT.*
[b] Received public assistance or welfare payments in the 12-month period prior to enrollment.
[c] Column percentage totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Administration, Funding, and Staffing Issues in Adult ESL Education

Adult ESL Administration and Funding

At the federal level, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) in the U.S. Department of Education has auspices over ESL instruction offered through AEA. Most of the authority for these programs is delegated to the state and local levels. Moreover, there is no comprehensive national coordination of ESL services across adult education programs. However, it should be noted that the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) funded by OVAE attempts to foster networking among state and local adult ESL programs.

Providing a profile of the funding structures and practices in adult ESL education has proven to be a difficult task. The information available on spending patterns among the various sources of support is limited across all adult education instructional components. Further, the limited availability of data on component-specific funding hampers efforts to disentangle expenditures for ESL from those for other adult education services. Below we present the information that is available on ESL expenditures, funding mechanisms, and costs.

Expenditures for ESL Instruction Across Funding Sources

A review by the Southport Institute estimates about $700 million per year is spent on adult ESL education in the U.S. across all combined sources. The Southport study maintains that federal and state adult education funding is the largest source of ESL dollars. In Program Year 1992, federal and state AEA expenditures totaled $1 billion. Assuming that this money is spent in proportion to the number of contact hours received and estimates of the cost of those contact hours, we estimate that the total state and federal AEA expenditure on ESL could be as much as $640 million annually.

The various sources of ESL funding. Support for adult ESL education is provided by a variety of sources.

- **Family Literacy.** Several state and federal demonstration programs, most notably Even Start, have begun to investigate the impact of literacy education provided in a family context. The Even Start Family Literacy program, administered by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education within the Department of Education, seeks to assure that parents become fully involved in their children's education, assist children in reaching their potential as students, and provide literacy training for participating parents. Of the three AEA services, Even Start projects are somewhat less likely to offer ESL instruction. According to Abt Associates (1994), English was the primary language of two-thirds of Even Start participants in 1992-1993. Just over 60 percent of Even Start sites provided ESL services while more than 81 percent offered ABE and ASE services (Abt, 1994). Further, only 15% the $91.4 million appropriated for Even Start in fiscal year 1994 was spent on adult education services. Therefore, the expenditures for adult ESL would be considerably under $10 million.

  In addition, the Family English Literacy Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, provides family literacy services to the LEP population. The budget for this initiative was $6.5 million for fiscal year 1994, down from $7 million for 1993. No funds have been appropriated for the Family English Literacy Program for fiscal year 1995.[10]

These programs and services will be supported by general funds of the U.S. Department of Education's Bilingual Education Program.

- **Workplace Education.** Workplace literacy programs are designed to integrate basic literac education with job-related skills training. The main federal effort in this area, the National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP), was established in 1988 as part of the Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments 1988. Administered by the Department of Education, the NWLP, since its inception in fisc year 1988, has made 261 grants totaling more than $82 million to partnerships in 45 states and territories. In recent years the National Workplace Literacy Program has received abo $20 million annually. For the cycle beginning in 1994, 61 percent of all programs (28 out 46 programs) offered ESL instruction.

- **Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program.** The JOBS Program offers states $ billion in annual matching funds to provide AFDC recipients with education, job training, a other services necessary to become permanently self-sufficient. The states match the federa funds at differing rates, but information on the total amount of state support is unavailable. About 300,000 welfare recipients are served annually and about half receive adult educatio services. No data are available on the number or percentage of JOBS participants who require or receive ESL services, but there is some evidence that adults who speak English a second language are underrepresented in JOBS programs (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). It is not clear whether this is caused by ESL adults' voluntary decisions not to participate, JOBS administrators' reluctance to enroll hard-to-serve ESL adults, a deficiency of ESL resources in JOBS programs, or other reasons. JOBS programs that do offer ESL services often merely refer clients to AEA/ESL programs which then pay for and provide t instruction.

- **Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA).** The objective of JTPA is to bring unemploy persons into permanent, unsubsidized, self-sustaining employment by providing training, ba education, job counseling, and placement. As with JOBS, JTPA appears to underserve LE adults. Southport researchers estimate that while LEP adults constitute 16-21 percent of th JTPA eligible population, they represent only 2.4 percent of the service population (Chisma Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). Most JTPA participants (over 700,000 in 1991) are served un Title II-A which was funded at about $1 billion in 1991. Only about 17,000 of the 704,00 Title II-A participants, or 2.4%, had limited English proficiency.

  In addition, Title IV of JTPA, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program, serves roughly 50,000 individuals annually, many of whom receive ESL instruction. In 1991, $7. million was spent under Title IV of JTPA.

- **Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.** The federal effort vocational education is directed by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act. In fiscal year 1993, the Perkins Act authorized about $1.2 billion for a variety of vocational education programs, research, and demonstrations. It is not known h many out-of-school adults receive ESL instruction through vocational education programs, it appears that it is few given the emphasis on serving high school students. Currently, the small Bilingual Vocational Training (BVT) program, authorized by Perkins, provides $2.9 million in assistance for bilingual vocational education and training for LEP individuals. However, no funding for the BVT program was requested in ED's 1995 budget.

- **Refugee Programs.** There are two federal programs that provide English language instruction to refugees. The first, administered by the State Department, offers ESL instruction to U.S. bound refugees in overseas camps, and serves about 20,000 individuals each year. The other, coordinated by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and administered by the states, offers short-term income support, social services and ESL instruction to refugees residing in the United States. ORR estimates that the program provided ESL instruction to 47,000 refugees at a cost of roughly $12 million in fiscal year 1992.

- **IRCA / SLIAG.** The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 provided amnesty to illegal immigrants in the United States. Immigrants seeking amnesty under IRCA are required to participate in at least 40 hours of adult education, thus increasing the demand for adult ESL programs. The Act was amended in 1988 to establish State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants (SLIAG) which were awarded to states on a formula basis to help offset the costs incurred in providing services to eligible aliens. Funding for this program ended in 1992 although states have been able to carry money forward through 1994. As SLIAG funds run out, some predict an even greater demand for ESL services paid for by federal AEA funds (Cohen, Maynard et al., 1994). The Immigration Act of 1990 further increased the demand for ESL instruction by raising the annual limit on immigration to the United States.

- **The National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE).** NCLE has also received funding through the Department of Education to collect and disseminate information on ESL-related issues. This organization does not provide ESL services itself, but rather offers technical assistance to organizations that do. Originally funded under the English Literacy Grants section of the AEA, NCLE's support increased from $250,000 in 1989-90 to $290,000 in 1992-93. Since then no funding has been appropriated for English Literacy Grants, and NCLE's operating expenses have been provided by the Department of Education's Office of Vocational Adult Education and the National Institute for Literacy. NCLE's annual budget for 1993-94 and for 1994-95 is $300,000.

- **Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Volunteer Groups.** Community based and volunteer organizations exist at the national, state, and local levels. While they clearly reach a minority of the ESL service population--no more than 5 percent (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993)--they are often credited with offering more personalized instruction (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993; Tenenbaum and Strang, 1992). CBOs, although numerous, are generally quite small. Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) are the primary national providers of volunteer-based literacy instruction. In 1990, the two accounted for more than 150 thousand volunteers who provided tutoring or administrative support to 200 thousand adult learners (Tenenbaum and Strang, 1992). About one third of LLA students received ESL instruction.

- **For-Credit Postsecondary ESL.** For-credit ESL is funded by a variety of sources including state and local appropriations for community colleges, federal and state appropriations for vocational education, tuition and fees paid by students, and Pell grants. While exact numbers are not available, evidence indicates that funds supporting for-credit ESL courses are approximately equal to those available for ESL programs supported by AEA. The per-pupil cost in these programs, however, is considerably higher than in AEA programs (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). Consequently, the funds do not go as far, reaching only about one-fourth the number of students that AEA/ESL programs serve (based on findings from the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, cited in Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).

State level data. Below we present examples from several states that illustrate the variability that exists in funding practices at the state level. These illustrations are drawn from a review of state adult education plans and interviews conducted with various states as part of a study to describe ho states allocate adult education funds (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and Research Triangle Institute, forthcoming).

- According to the *California State Plan for Adult Basic Education: July 1, 1989 to June 30, 1993*, 85-90% of California's combined federal and state expenditures on adult basic education support ESL services. This amounts to expenditures in California between $157 and $166 million in fiscal year 1991, or between $270 and $290 per ESL student.

- By design, ESL accounts for about 50% of adult education expenditures in New York. Th Southport authors report that several states follow New York's approach and attempt to spl their resources evenly between ESL and ABE. (The Southport authors note that several of these states are moving from a 50/50 ESL/ABE split to one that is 60/40 in favor of ESL.)

- In some states, separate funding tracks exist for ESL programs. In Maryland, ESL provid only have to compete with each other for federal and state funds for the ESL component o their programs. This system guarantees that Maryland's ESL network receives consistent support over time. In the recent past, Pennsylvania also had a separate funding track for i ESL providers, but this has been discontinued.

- Utah sets aside $30,000 of the state's federal AEA grant each year to fund community-bas ESL programs; this set-aside accounts for only about 0.5% of Utah's combined federal an state adult education funding.

- New Jersey's Evening Schools for Foreign-Born Residents program, which is funded separately from its mainstream adult education efforts, supported about 70 such school of 1992. The maximum grant available to each participating school is $5,000.

- Many states use formulas based either on enrollment counts or on the target populatio an area; a number use both elements in their funding decisions. However, explicit measures of LEP populations or the need for ESL are usually not incorporated into th formulas. The most common need indicators beyond estimates of the adult target population are unemployment rates, measures of population density, and AFDC participation rates, but these are used infrequently by states.

Costs of Providing Adult ESL Programs

Development Associates researchers estimate that the cost of an hour of instruction is $4.28 p student for ESL, $6.11 per student for ABE, and $5.12 per student for ASE.[11] They also conclude that, on an aggregate basis, predominantly ESL programs spend more of their budget on instruction and less on administration than other types of programs:

	Predominantly ESL Programs	All Programs
Instructional Staff	71.1%	61.3%
Administrative Staff	15.0%	18.5%
Materials	6.2%	10.4%
Facilities	3.4%	5.0%
Other	4.3%	4.8%

Staff Development and Professionalization

Staff development has become a central issue in the adult ESL arena. Many argue that staff members should receive formal training in ESL education prior to teaching. There is debate over the skills and credentials that teachers should have, as well as the cultural and linguistic backgrounds that they should bring to the program. However, published research and personal communication suggest that many adult ESL instructor positions are part-time with relatively low wages, few if any benefits, and little job security. Because of these conditions, it has proven difficult to recruit and retain experienced and well-educated professionals to the ESL field.

- Staff development is commonly cited as an important component of ESL programs (Crandall, 1993b; Kutner et al., 1992; Foster, 1988; Kazemek, 1988), but there are no empirical data to either confirm or deny this assertion.

- Most ESL literacy instructors have college degrees, but these degrees are in many different fields. Those with degrees in education are often trained in the instruction of children, not adults. Very few advanced degrees are offered in adult ESL instruction (Crandall, 1993b). Consequently, the bulk of staff development occurs through job-related training such as seminars, conferences, and workshops (Kutner et al., 1992; Tibbets, Kutner, Hemphill, & Jones; 1991).

Experts in the adult ESL field cite a number of factors that hamper staff development and mitigate against professionalization:

- Staff turnover rates in the field are very high (Crandall, 1993b).

- Few states have training or certification requirements for adult ESL instructors (Crandall, 1993b; Kutner et al., 1992).

- The lack of a unified adult education research base makes it unclear how best to professionalize ESL instructors (Tibbets, Kutner, Hemphill, & Jones, 1991).

- There is ongoing debate within the ESL field about how to foster professionalization through certification and not limit opportunities for good teachers who lack academic credentials (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Crandall (1993b) suggests that 'credentialing' --

through demonstration of proficiency rather than mandatory academic certification -- would offer a pragmatic middle ground.

Difficulties in developing appropriate curricula for adult educator training have led some researchers to recommend more general approaches to staff development which can be applied across all adult education programs (Crandall, 1993b; Kutner et al., 1992; Lytle et al., 1992; Sherman et al., 1991). Key program elements suggested in these studies include:

- Utilizing the diverse knowledge and background of educators as an expanded curriculum base.
- Conducting needs assessments of staff as well as students.
- Building a collaborative inter-agency research community to promote dissemination of knowledge and theory.
- Creating a professional environment by rewarding those who engage in staff development with increased salary, advancement, or release time.

Curricular and Instructional Approaches to Adult ESL Education

So far this report has revealed the considerable mix that exists among adult ESL participants in terms of their background characteristics, entry-level skills, motivations, and goals. That diversity, coupled with the bottom-up structure of the adult education delivery system, precipitates a high level of diversity in the curricular and instructional methods used in adult ESL education programs throughout the country.

A thorough review of the literature suggests that there is no single way to identify what material is taught and what instructional methods are used in adult ESL education. Adult ESL education instruction may consist of basic literacy, general ESL, family literacy, workplace literacy, or community-oriented literacy sometimes offered in the native language of the learners. The types of curriculum and instruction utilized can depend on several factors. One is the characteristics and goals of the participants. For instance, a community-oriented approach may not be appropriate for a culturally-diverse group of learners. In contrast, the instructional approaches often depend less on the greatest need in the community than on the availability of funding; the growth of workplace and family literacy programs can, at least in part, be attributed to the categorical funding that has become available in support of these topics in recent years (Wrigley, 1993b). Despite the diversity that exists, experts in the field suggest that there are central priorities that are shared by most adult education programs and underlie program-specific approaches.

In an effort to provide a meaningful overview of the commonly used curricular and instructional approaches, we first present the overarching priorities that motivate decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. Next, we review a number of considerations, and many of the common terms used to represent adult ESL curriculum and instruction.

Priorities that Guide Adult ESL Curricular and Instructional Approaches

While several decades ago, ESL instruction tended to rely primarily on practices that teach language as a set of skills isolated from the personal experiences or cultural contexts of the learners, more recently there has been agreement among adult ESL educators that language should be taught within a social context. Experts say that it is not language in isolation that is the emphasis of adult ESL education, but rather language for a purpose. While this two-fold prioritization of language and context unites many adult ESL education programs, there is some variation in how these priorities are applied at the site level. Two dichotomies seem to characterize the diversity that exists.[12]

Starting Point

While program administrators and instructors tend to agree that both language and context should play a role in adult ESL education, they vary in which should ultimately motivate the curriculum. This decision has implications for both the curricular and instructional techniques.

- **Language first.** Some programs structure curricular units around components of the English language. Lessons begin with instruction on parts of speech, and subsequently focus on applying the newly acquired language units to a relevant social situation. For instance, students might learn what a verb is, and then be asked to describe their morning

in terms of action words. A dialogue drill is a instructional strategy that uses the "language first" approach.

- **Context first.** Other programs begin with a situation and teach the language relevant to or necessary in that context. For instance, in a lesson pertaining to buying groceries the context necessitates language such as asking a clerk where particular items are located. Through this context, students learn the notion of a question, and possibly even interrogative words in general. Instructional strategies commonly used in this approach include whole language learning and problem solving.

Focal Point

Programs also vary in terms of the focal point, or ultimate goal, and this can have implications fo the curriculum as well as the general affective environment of the program. According to expert two variations characterize the majority of programs.

- **Individual student emphasis.** The principal goal of these programs is to provide students with the language and literacy skills that they need to live better, more fulfilling lives. These programs are driven primarily by student goals such as better jobs, higher income, and increased ability to participate in the education of their children.

- **Societal emphasis.** Programs motivated by a societal emphasis generally view adult ESL education as an investment in human capital. These programs encourage the collective good by improving the language and literacy of LEP adults in order to facilitate more productive participation in the economic, political, and social institutions of the U.S.

While these two dichotomies stimulate the practice of different approaches to adult ESL curriculum and instruction, there remains a common primary emphasis on both language and context. The goal is to help students learn language for a purpose, making context an essential component of adult ESL curriculum and instruction.

Considerations in Adult ESL Curricular and Instructional Approaches

Approaches Based on Goals of the Program and the Learners

In an effort to meet the goals of students, programs vary widely. The seven motivations that adu ESL participants expressed in the Southport study (1993) can be expected to guide the curricula and instructional approaches used at various sites.

- **Survival, lifestyle, or entry-level ESL.** The instructional methods which follow from this motivation focus on oral language and acculturation over literacy skills. Literacy is generally limited to functional purposes. For instance, reading and writing is confined to the comprehension of a few important words, signs, and symbols. Attention is also given to helping participants access social services such as health care, legal support, and transportation. In general, curricular and instructional materials are designed to teach th initial communication skills necessary to function in American society.

- **English acquisition as a goal in its own right.** Programs that recognize this common motivation generally use multi-level instructional model discussed later in this chapter (i.e., progression through beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels).

- **ESL for academic study.** ESL programs that prepare students for academic study generally involve two steps. First, students take ESL courses without credit to learn basic English literacy skills. Lessons are sometimes taught in the context of the intended subject of study (e.g., medical field). Once students master the introductory skills needed to begin formal study, they often graduate to a for-credit ESL course which is usually offered in an academic department. Here the focus is on grammar and formal writing.

- **ESL for employment: pre-employment training.** Pre-employment ESL literacy education provided by federal programs such as the Refugee Resettlement Program, JOBS, and JTPA generally require participants to learn language, literacy, and a trade over a very short period of time ranging from several months to a year. There is a great deal of variation in these programs. Some focus on only one of the three emphases. Others integrate language, literacy, and vocational education, focussing on the language skills necessary in a particular occupation.

- **ESL for employment: workplace training.** The focus in workplace ESL programs is on the vocabulary, grammar, and other English literacy skills necessary for the job. The curriculum is focussed on job literacy skills, and the program is deemed successful if it results in increases in the effectiveness of worker performance. Often programs are hampered by worksites where the use of English is not reinforced by supervisors and other employees.

- **ESL for citizenship.** The most common approach used to improve skills for citizenship is the conventional multi-level instructional model. The emphasis extends beyond the basic skills necessary to function in society to those which empower individuals to actively participate in their communities.

- **ESL in family literacy.** These programs typically enroll mothers and their pre-school children. In general, for part of the day mothers and their children are taught age-appropriate English literacy skills in separate classes. In addition, adults are taught parenting and other survival skills. For the balance of the day, the adults and children are gathered in a single class where they are taught to read and converse with one another in English. Finally, there is generally a homework component where parents help children with school assignments and read to their children.

The Role of Native Language

The role of the native language of adult learners is an important consideration in ESL educational programs, one that distinguishes ESL from ABE/ASE instructional components. The degree to which the native languages of the learners are integrated or overlooked in the adult ESL classroom depends, in part, on what the native language is, the proficiency of the instructor in that language, and the level of diversity that exists among languages that are represented in the class.

- **Bilingual** approaches foster a student's ability to function in both languages and cultures. This is most appropriate for common native languages such as Spanish. The bilingual

approach is only possible in a situation where a critical mass of individuals exists to support the survival of the native culture and language within the American culture.

- **Transitional** approaches encourage students to shift from their native languages and cultures to embrace the English language and American culture. Native language is used only to the degree that it fosters this cultural and linguistic transition.

- **Immersion** approaches generally rely primarily on the English language for the purpose of teaching English literacy. This approach is generally used for students from remote cultures and whose native language is uncommon, even within the ESL class. In addition, when teachers are not familiar with the native languages of the learners or the class represents a diverse mix of native languages, the English immersion approach is generally used.

- **Native language literacy** is used to address the literacy needs of students who are not literate in their native language. Advocates of this approach argue that teaching literacy in one's native language is a prerequisite for literacy in English as a second language (Gillespie, 1994).

Program Structure

According to experts in the field, there is some debate over how best to structure adult ESL programs. On one hand, proponents of ability grouping argue that teachers are most efficient in a homogeneous ability setting. Conversely, others argue that multi-level classes offer students the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. Further, the heterogenous approach is more consistent with the educational systems in the native cultures of many immigrants.

Regardless of this debate, currently the majority of ESL, as well as ABE and ASE, programs include a number of levels through which students progress. As they meet standards set for one level, they advance to the next. Standards for these levels tend to vary considerably across programs. While all states have been encouraged to set explicit state-wide standards of mastery for the various levels of adult ESL education, California is the only state which has done so.[13]

As will be discussed in the next section, these levels often play an important role in program accountability to funding sources. A report by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education in the U.S. Department of Education (1991) provides general guidelines for these various levels with respect to the ESL component of AEA:

- **Beginning ESL instruction.** Adults who have limited or no proficiency in the English language are placed at this level of instruction, where the primary emphasis is on the development of listening and speaking skills. Other literacy skills such as reading and writing are introduced at this level.

- **Intermediate ESL instruction.** Individuals placed at this level have shown some degree of competence in communicating in English. The instructional emphasis is on the development of reading and writing skills, which is integrated with ongoing attention to speaking and listening skills.

- **Advanced ESL instruction.** This level of instruction is designed for adults who are able to communicate in English but who need instruction in usage. Instructional

emphasis is placed on English usage such as idioms, language for specific purposes, and grammatical structure. At this level, instruction in reading and writing is integrated with speaking and listening.

In addition, some programs have two sub-levels within these three primary levels, such as "high beginning" or "low advanced" (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). While this structure is common among adult ESL programs, there is little information regrading exactly how common, or what really happens at the various levels of instruction.

Use of Technology

Technology has been advanced as a potentially valuable resource in English language and literacy instruction. While the costs of using technology in the form of computers and video have often been prohibitively high in the past, these materials are becoming more accessible even to smaller programs (Wrigley and Guth, 1992). The use of technology in the adult ESL classroom has many potential benefits. Most notably, it can facilitate context-specific and level-appropriate teaching in a diverse classroom. Diverse students can work on the same task, which can be altered to fit the language and literacy needs of each individual in the classroom.

In addition, both computers and video have the potential to make learning relevant and meaningful. Computers can be used to simulate real life activities. For instance, they can be used to publish student writing, to compile a bilingual dictionary for classroom use, or to make flyers or posters. Video tapes provide a visual context for learning. They provide a dynamic way for students to examine the use of language in different social situations. Finally, knowledge of technology is a marketable skill, which can have pay-offs in the workforce. Many learners are aware of and motivated by this factor (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

However, a number of drawbacks are associated with investing in instructional technology at the current time. So far, the majority of the software that has been developed for adult ESL instruction is an oversimplification of the way participants learn language. Materials tend to be skill-based with little attention given to context. In addition, most software programs cannot recognize non-native writing as an approximation for English. The focus is on correct grammar over meaning. Finally, computerized instruction runs the risk of making the learning process too individualized and stifling interaction among students in a classroom.

Wrigley and Guth (1992) argue that instructional technology has the potential to benefit adult ESL programs. This is contingent, however, on the continued development of appropriate and meaningful materials.[14]

Curricular and Instructional Resources

While many curricular materials are available, there is no standard curriculum that dominates adult ESL education. One prevalent practice is for state and local staff to develop and disseminate their own curricular materials. Many choose to rely not on standard marketed text books, but rather on print and texts that are present in the immediate environment of the learners (Wrigley and Guth, 1992). The available resources are of two varieties. First, there are a plethora of packaged curricula which include texts, videos, and computer programs. In addition, there are a number of more flexible guides that offer suggestions for curricular and instructional practices, and can be adapted at the local level to adhere to the participant population and

program goals. An extensive list of the available resources is provided by Wrigley and Guth (1992).

Since the social context of learning is an essential consideration in adult ESL education, the methods of instruction tend to involve some understanding of the learners and their backgroun along with a balance between planned activities and flexibility. Experts assert that the most effective teachers are those who are familiar with an eclectic set of strategies upon which they draw depending on the students and the situation. The use of learner-generated models and hands-on experience is common. Many examples of learner-based approaches are presented in the literature on adult ESL curricular and instructional practices:

- Integrating reading and writing (Rabideau, 1993)
- Dialogue journals among students or between student and teacher (Peyton, 1993)
- Publishing student writing (Peyton, 1991)
- Closed caption TV (Parks, 1994)
- Children's literature (Smallwood, 1992)
- Environmental print such as money, paychecks, restaurant menus, store advertisements, and product labels (Wrigley and Guth, 1992)
- Interactive lessons which involve experiences and discussion (Wrigley and Guth, 1992)
- Authentic texts such as choosing a birthday card or making a name tag (Wrigley and Gu 1992).

Along with published materials, state and local training programs play a strong role in disseminating these instructional strategies.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Accountability Structures

The emphasis on assessment and accountability for all adult education programs funded under the AEA has been increasing in recent years. The National Literacy Act (NLA) passed in 1991 contributed greatly to this trend. Among other things, this legislation established requirements for program quality and evaluation. The following federal core indicators were developed by experts and practitioners to monitor program effectiveness and to identify areas for program improvement:

- Educational gains
- Program planning
- Curriculum and instruction
- Staff development
- Support services
- Recruitment
- Retention.

Elliot and Hayward (1994) reviewed 1992 state adult education plan amendments and found that all states had adopted indicators for a number of requirements for program quality. However, component-specific data are limited, hampering efforts to assess ESL effectiveness.

The U.S. Department of Education requires that states submit standardized test data each year on 20 percent of the population served in their programs (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993). In addition to the data that are required at the federal level, other funding sources require that programs be accountable for participant progress. While the information required for program accountability may differ among funding sources, requirements generally consist of some evidence that program participants are realizing literacy gains and/or advancing in level of instruction. The process of data collection generally involves the administration of a standardized pre-test to determine initial placement, and subsequent periodic tests to determine grades and instructional level advancement.

One difficulty associated with assessment is that programs often depend upon a variety of funding sources that vary considerably in terms of required information and timelines. Some observers contend that the fragmented nature of the delivery system often forces programs into a reactive, rather than a proactive approach to assessment and evaluation. In other words, program staff and administrators strive to meet the often uncoordinated mandated requirements of the funding sources to the point where they lose sight of the benefits that assessment can have for program instruction (Balliro, 1989).

This section of the report explores the major issues in adult ESL student assessment and program evaluation. We first focus on the many goals that guide and shape the assessment process. Next, we present the methods used to assess these goals.

Goals of Adult ESL Educational Programs

In order to identify effective program approaches, it is necessary to first define the range of goals germane to programs. ESL programs are guided by goals at the student, program, and national levels.

Student level

- English language and literacy gains (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
- Progression through levels of program
- Better employment opportunities
- Higher income
- Increased educational opportunities
- Social outcomes; increased ability to participate in community and society
- Intergenerational literacy

Program level

- Enrollment
- Retention
- Progression through levels of program
- Aggregate gains in student proficiency/achievement
- Transition into jobs/education

National level

- Decline in limited English proficiency among adults in U.S.
- National productivity
- Equal opportunity/equal participation

At each level there is investment and consequent interest in assessing effectiveness. Unfortunately, data and large-scale assessments are not currently available to indicate the degr to which adult ESL programs are meeting many of these goals.

Methods of Assessing Goals

The goals most frequently assessed are those used to document program success for accountab purposes. In general, programs are evaluated in terms of aggregate student progress. In addit several large scale national studies have devoted attention to assessing adult ESL program effectiveness in terms of a number of the other goals named above. In the following sections, first review methods of assessing educational gains, and then present what is known about the assessment of other program goals.

Educational Gains

Literacy and achievement data are frequently the product of testing, but the tests used vary widely. Currently, there exist a number of options regarding the type of tests available to mea student gains. Wrigley (1992) provides an overview of the types of assessments that programs use:

- Standardized, norm-referenced tests are designed to measure the achievement, knowle and skills of large groups of learners across programs.

- Materials-based assessments are "used to link teaching and testing and are often used in individualized instruction...to place students in the appropriate skills levels and to check progress and achievement."

- "Alternative, program-based assessments reflect the educational approach and literacy curriculum of a particular program and focus on literacy practices, perceptions, and performance along with the impact the program is having on learners' lives. Program-based assessments fall into two categories: (a) assessments that focus on discrete skills...; and (b) integrated assessments that look at language and literacy holistically."

While standardized tests are the dominant instrument used to assess program effectiveness, there is currently considerable debate regarding which types of tests or instruments are most appropriate to measure the educational progress of individual adults in ESL programs. On one hand, advocates of conventional measures of effectiveness argue in favor of objective assessment tools which utilize valid and reliable tests that can be compared across programs. In contrast, others support alternative approaches which rely on assessment tools that are program-specific and learner-centered, and incorporate rich sources of subjective data supplied by teachers. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with both conventional and alternative assessment methods. Decisions regarding which type of assessment is most appropriate depends largely on the goals being assessed and the purpose of the evaluation.

Conventional approaches: standardized tests. As mentioned above, a central purpose for assessment is to provide evidence of program accountability to funding sources. Funding sources use aggregate test results to measure program effectiveness. In general, it is desirable to have data which are valid and reliable, are objectively measured, and can be compared across programs. Consequently, standardized literacy testing is relatively widespread among adult ESL programs. The benefits of these tests are numerous (Wrigley, 1992).

- They have been tested and shown to be both valid and reliable.
- They are cost-effective and presumably require minimal staff training.
- Funding sources accept them as part of the documentation of program accountability.
- They can be aggregated for inter-program comparisons.
- They provide learners with information regarding their standing relative to students in other programs.
- They can be scored quickly and accurately.
- They prepare students for future standardized test taking.

Although standardized literacy testing offers useful information to funders and policy makers, a number of shortcomings are associated with this type of assessment (Wrigley, 1992).

- Language, literacy, and culture are not treated individually, providing no way to disentangle specific sources of strength or deficiency.
- The complex socially-grounded nature of language and literacy is reduced to skill acquisition.
- Much learning and development is overlooked in these tests (e.g., non-classroom language development, non-English language development, real-life skills, and affective growth).
- Without the proper training, the tests can easily be misused.
- There is often misalignment between the tests and the curricular and instructional approaches used in ESL programs.

Since several of these shortcomings are unique to ESL, it may be the case that standardized test are more problematic for ESL than for ABE and ASE assessment purposes. However, we have found no sources to verify this.

Adult education programs use a variety of standardized tests. Some use the same tests for both the English speaking and non-English speaking populations they serve. The most commonly use basic skills assessments are the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Adult Basic Learnin Examination (ABLE), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). Other programs use standardized tests specifically designed to measure literacy among ESL populations. These include the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL). Descriptions of these standardized tests used to assess student progress in adult ESL educational programs are provided below:[15]

- **Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE).** The TABE measures reading, writing, and mat achievement, and is the most widely used instrument in adult education programs. Compared to other standardized tests for adults, the TABE assesses a wide array of reading and writing skills, but does not include a writing sample evaluation. The TABE test is not appropriate for adults with reading skills below the second grade level.

- **Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE).** The ABLE measures basic education skills of adults, including vocabulary, comprehension, math/problem solving, comprehension skills, and ability to draw inferences. Jackson (1990) notes that the ABLE is responsive several criticisms of other instruments. Its content and questions are adult in tone, and most material deals with common, everyday matters that are familiar to test takers.

- **Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS).** There are several separat CASAS tests, that are used widely in both ESL and ABE programs. The life skills *language* test, more commonly used in ESL programs, measures ability to apply listening comprehension skills in everyday life situations. Because the language skills test is designed for administration to a group, it does not examine English speaking skills. The life skills *reading* test, used in both ABE and ESL programs, focuses on basic reading ski in a life-skills context. Some sections of the basic reading test require minimal reading skills.

- **Basic English Skills Test (BEST).** The BEST assesses speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills of low proficiency non-native English speakers. The first section of the test consists of an oral interview along with interactive questions and answers. The second section examines reading and writing skills in more detail. The test has been described a exciting and innovative, but time-consuming to administer.

- **Basic Inventory of Natural Languages (BINL).** The BINL provides for a grammatical analysis of spoken language samples. This test is specifically designed for ESL students.

Alternative Approaches. There is a wide range of alternative approaches to assessing student educational progress in adult ESL programs. These methods draw upon the rich and extensive data available to teachers, staff, ar students through observation and experience. While these methods tend to be program-specific and learner-centered, a growing literature base and networking system fosters the sharing of assessment practices across programs. However, adaptation to program-specific goals and students is common during implementation. While

standardized tests are generally independent of the instructional program, alternative approaches to assessment are generally integrated into the instructional program.

Alternative assessment approaches are often limited in their capacity to provide data for comparisons among programs, and thus are rarely used for program accountability. However, efforts are underway to find ways to translate the rich body of subjective data that teachers collect in the classroom into policy language.

Alternative assessment approaches that utilize subjective information include the following (Wrigley, 1992):

- Learner-teacher conferences
- Reading and writing profiles
- Reading files and free reading logs
- Learner evaluation grids or charts
- Portfolios
- Learner profiles
- Questionnaires and surveys.

Measuring Other Goals

As mentioned above, assessment and evaluation efforts generally concentrate on identifying success in terms of educational progress at the program level. However, there are many other goals at the program level as well as at the student and national levels which should also be considered. Several national studies have collected data pertaining to other goals of adult ESL programs. Available data on participation, retention, human capital development, and personal and social outcomes are generally the product of interviews and surveys completed by program participants and staff members. While these data are of interest and can inform the evaluation process, they can be misrepresentative, especially in the absence of control or closely matched comparison group data.

Available Evidence of Effectiveness

In this section, we rely on what data is available to assess the effectiveness of adult ESL programs. Most of the results presented here are drawn from the most recent Development Associates report on the evaluation of adult education programs (1994b).[16] Two central questions guide this portion of the report. To what degree are adult ESL programs meeting the many goals of different stakeholders in adult education? In addition, what specific approaches appear to be most successful in meeting the goals set?

Assessing the effectiveness of adult ESL programs is precluded by a number of difficulties. Some of these are noted by Moore and Stavrianos (1994) in terms of evaluating adult education programs in general. First, few evaluation studies include control groups which are necessary to link effects to program participation. In the absence of control group data, it is impossible to relate any gains that might have occurred during the duration of the evaluation to the adult education program. It is conceivable that such gains could have been made in the absence of the programmatic intervention. In addition, many evaluations rely on data provided from program staff or participants. While this information is valuable, it is not always an accurate account of program effects. Third, the multitude of goals being pursued by adult education programs, and the disagreement which exists regarding how to measure goal attainment present fundamental barriers to assessing program effectiveness.

General Success at Meeting Level-Specific Goals

Student level

According to the Development Associates report (1994b), modest effects of participation in adult ESL programs have been detected at the student level.

- **Achievement.** Adult ESL participants evidenced some progress in reading achievement (as measured on the CASAS standardized test). However, the lack of a control group makes it difficult to attribute these gains to participation.

- **Skill development.** Less than half of the participants felt that the ESL program helped them to improve their skills in reading and writing (44 percent), or speaking and listening (48 percent). Only 20 percent felt that the program helped them improve their math skills.

- **Advancement in the program.** Participants showed some progress in advancing from one level of the educational program to the next, however, less than 50 percent at any level (beginning, intermediate, or advanced) progressed from one instructional level to the next during their enrollment in the program. Over 40 percent of beginning ESL clients and 30 percent of beginning ABE participants advanced at least one instructional level during the study's 18 month tracking period. ASE students could not advance because they were considered to be in the highest instructional level.

- **Employment.** The Development Associates reports contain evidence of a positive effect of adult ESL participation on employment. Two-thirds of ESL respondents who were

initially unemployed but who became employed within 6 months after leaving the program claimed that participation in the program contributed to their becoming employed. The corresponding figures for ABE and ASE are 36 and 38 percent, respectively. In addition, 88 percent of ESL clients who stayed in the same job reported that participation helped them in the job, and 80 percent of those who changed jobs claimed that participation helped them get a better job. Both of these figures are greater than those for the ABE and ASE respondent populations.

- **Further education.** Of the 17 percent of AEA participants who transition to other forms of education, ESL students most often move to other English language programs. In contrast, ABE students tend to move into GED programs, and ASE students move to areas of higher education.[17]

- **Personal goals.** In all three component programs, about 70 percent of clients reported that the program helped them achieve at least one of the personal goals measured in the study. These include feeling better about oneself, making others feel better about oneself, contributing to family and community, depending less on others for help, and helping children with homework.

Program level

As stated before, goals at the program level tend to receive the most attention with regard to assessment, given the need for program accountability. The Development Associates study (1994b) reports aggregate program effects for the three components of the AEA, providing a means to consider ESL program effectiveness relative to that of ABE and ASE.

- Enrollment is highest in ESL (51 percent of AEA clients are enrolled in ESL programs), despite the relatively small target population.

- ESL students who receive 1 or more hours of instruction persist longer, receiving a median of 113 hours of instruction, compared to 35 for ABE and 28 for ASE.

- ESL students who receive 1 or more hours of instruction are enrolled in the program for an average of 30 weeks, compared to 20 for ABE and 17 for ASE.

National level

One way to measure effectiveness at the national level is in terms of the size of the adult LEP population in the U.S. Both Southport and Development Associates show that this population is growing, regardless of modest program successes. The implication is that the current education system is not keeping up with the language needs among new immigrants. We found no data to inform effectiveness in terms of national productivity and equal opportunity to participate.

Effectiveness of Specific Approaches to Adult ESL Education

Aguirre International researchers reviewed numerous curricular and instructional methods used in adult ESL literacy programs. The series of reports produced were based on data collected from an extensive review of the literature, an examination of 123 descriptions of ESL literacy programs and site visits to 9 projects (Guth and Wrigley, 1992a). In one of the final reports produced in

the study, the authors present effective approaches to providing ESL instruction (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

The Aguirre authors conclude that it is desirable to encourage meaning-based learning that is nested within a social context. The following general approaches are described by Wrigley and Guth (1992) as having the potential to be effective:

- **Functional approach**--focusses on life skills.
- **Natural approach**--parallels language acquisition pattern of young children; sequentially teaches listening before speaking, and reading before writing.
- **Communicative approach**--addresses the social and cultural aspects of language (e.g., what to say to whom).
- **Whole language approach**--integrates all mediums of language as they come naturally.
- **Language experience approach**--English literacy based on stories of participant experiences; integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- **Participatory approach**--focusses on communal problem-solving; emphasis on cognitive knowledge.
- **Ethnographic approach**--aims to develop literacy skills as they pertain to culture.

Experts in adult ESL teacher training assert that most effective adult ESL instructors are familiar with a wide range of strategies and methods that can be used as the students or situations require.

In addition, the Aguirre researchers concluded that the use of computer technology in adult ESL education can result in effective programs. Not only can technology foster the acquisition of English language and literacy skills, they assert, but familiarity with computers has the potential to increase the marketability of the learners when they enter the workforce. As more meaningful software materials are developed, these approaches have the potential to be effective at multiple levels (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

Future Research

Federal support for adult education research was expanded by the 1989 amendments to the AEA, which required states to dedicate 10 percent of federal AEA funds to a combination of demonstration projects and teacher training. This trend continued when the National Literacy Act of 1991 increased the set-aside to 15 percent, and created the National Institute for Literacy to serve as a central clearinghouse and conduct research in the field.

The research that has grown out of these initiatives has begun to shed light on many aspects of adult education. Still, a great deal remains unknown, particularly in the field of ESL instruction. Experts in the field have recommended a number of directions for future research. (Development Associates, 1994b; Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993) Some of these are presented below.

- Currently, the best measure of the need for ESL services is a rough estimate based on census measures of English proficiency. The need for ABE and ASE services has been examined in much greater detail through the recent National Adult Literacy Survey and other studies. Gauging the need and demand for ESL services is an important first step in developing a strategy to improve ESL services.

- In addition, given the high concentration of the LEP target population in various states and cities throughout the country, it seems reasonable to collect data and pay particular attention to the most affected localities.

- To date, the limited research on the outcomes of ESL instruction has focused on the *amount* of instruction. Given the diversity of instructional methods and curricula, particularly in ESL, a more appropriate focus may be the *type* of instruction that is provided.

- Additionally, future studies may want to address the comparative effectiveness of specific types of instruction among the diverse ESL sub-groups (e.g., ESL literacy, beginning/intermediate/advanced ESL, LEP adults with high school diplomas, and ESL students from different cultural groups.)

- The Development Associates results suggest that the presence of full-time staff has a positive effect on ESL and ABE learner outcomes (Development Associates, 1994b). However, the Development Associates study did not examine the issue of program staff in depth. Given this preliminary evidence, a more detailed analysis of the importance of administrative and instructional staff, their credentials and training, and the curricular resources available to them may be valuable.

Endnotes

1. Findings presented in the Development Associates report are based on data from three sources. First, a mail survey was sent to the 2,819 local adult education instructional service programs receiving federal basic state grants funds in the program year ending June 30, 1990. Next, a longitudinal study was conducted in 116 sites to provide data on issues such as program structure, approaches, students, recruitment, staff, and funding. Finally, the researchers conducted a follow-up telephone survey of 5,401 clients in 109 local programs. These clients were included in the longitudinal phase of the study and were known to have been out of the program for about 6 months. The majority of the survey reflects the responses of the 4,653 respondents who attended at least 3 adult education classes.

2. A definition of limited English proficiency which utilizes census data is offered by Thorne and Fleenor (1993). These individuals are those who indicated in the 1990 census that they speak English less than "very well".

3. The results presented in the Southport study are based on a variety of research activities conducted by the institute. This included a survey of available literature and information sources; a series of one-day consulting meetings with experts in the field; analyses of data available on adult ESL and related topics; and telephone and personal interviews. In addition, two-week site visits were conducted in Texas, California, and Massachusetts, and shorter visits were made to several other U.S. cities where staff interviewed policy makers, administrators, teachers, students, and scholars. Finally, a panel of nine expert consultants were asked to write papers on various topics related to adult ESL, which further informed the paper. The report produced is based on all sources of information. However, often times the exact source of the information presented in the Southport study is not made explicit by the authors. Consequently, while we include these findings in our synthesis, we are frequently unable to identify data sources or to further analyze or quantify the information extracted from the Southport study.

4. It should be noted that many adult ESL programs are provided in community college or postsecondary environments. The point here is that in most postsecondary institutions, English proficiency must be attained prior to admission to a non-ESL academic or vocational program.

5. It should be added that over half of all immigrants in 1990 were IRCA immigrants.

6. These remarks are based on personal communication with staff members at the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) in October, 1994.

7. The Development Associates study reports that approximately 1.8 million "new" clients entered adult education programs during the 12 month period beginning in April, 1991. "New" clients are those who had not received instruction in that program during the preceding year. The 2.6 to 3.2 million figure includes persons who entered the programs between April 1991 and April 1992, as well as those who entered in previous years but were still participating between April 1991 and April 1992.

8. The size of the discrepancy between these estimates may be due to factors such as the differences that result from client-reported and program-reported participation. Program-reported figures may count someone who participates in two courses as two participants. The National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP) authors concluded that "[a] full understanding of this apparent discrepancy would require a careful study of the state and federal reporting system, which lies outside the scope of our evaluation."

9. A series of reports were produced by Development Associates, and we rely on data included three of these. The Executive Summary report (1994b) is the primary source of the information v present. However, some data in the second and fourth interim reports (1993, 1994c) were exclud from the most recent version. We present these as well, and we document the source of the da throughout. The Development Associates' data are based on a nationally representative sample 22,000 new clients entering adult education programs over the 12 month period between April 2 1991 and April 21, 1992.

10. It should be noted that the Department of Education has budgeted $3.1 million for fiscal ye 1995 to provide one-year continution grants to existing Family English Literacy programs.

11. These figures are based on case studies of 12 programs, including no for-credit programs. It unclear what effect the inclusion of for-credit programs would have on the estimates presented her On one hand, we know that for-credit ESL programs account for approximately one-half of all ES expenditures, but reach only about one-fourth the number of students as AEA/ESL. However, it also likely that students in for-credit programs persist through disproportionately more instruction hours than those in not-for-credit programs.

12. This information is based on personal communication with Lynn Savage, Technical Director Staff Development at the Institute for California Adult Education, February, 1995.

13. This information is based on personal communication with NCLE staff members, Fran Keen and Joy Peyton, October, 1994.

14. Wrigley and Guth (1992) present a table which reviews a number of examples of the use computers and video to achieve various instructional aims (p.87-91).

15. The descriptions presented here are adapted from Jackson (1990). See also Moore, Myers, a Alamprese (1994) and Sticht (1990).

16. It should be noted that findings presented in the Development Associates report are larg based on self-reported data. See endnote one for a more thorough review of the data sources us in that study.

17. The relevant questions in the Development Associates survey asked students who moved further education what type of educational program they were enrolled in. The options include series of items such as ABE instruction, ASE instruction, further English language instructic community college courses, and four-year college courses. Respondents could check more than o response. Consequently, an ESL student who progressed to an ASE program, could perceive t as both ASE and further English language instruction.

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